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Peril to Conservatives

(An Editorial reprinted from today's Los Angeles Times)

The Times published last week a heavily documented series of articles which defined the nature and methods of the John Birch Society in the words of its absolute master.

The quotations from Robert Welch, and from some of his lieutenants, nail down the treacherous fallacy that an honorable or noble objective justifies any means to achieve it.

Our fear of the John Birch Society is based on our own findings, on the meticulously researched articles written by Gene Blake. In them it can be read, within quotation marks, that Communists must be fought with their own weapons, smear for smear. Even—and the quotations are brutal—with sedition.

Every conservative must adhere to the general purpose of the society as it is stated by Robert Welch: "to promote less government, more responsibility and a better world."

Every loyal American must agree devoutly with the society's immediate intention of "stopping the Communists and destroying their conspiracy, or at least breaking its grip on our government and shattering its power within the United States."

And every informed American must agree with the society's tenet that the United States is actually now engaged with Soviet Russia in a struggle for the survival of our system.

With all honorable Americans, this newspaper looks with disgust and dread upon the godless materialism and blood-soaked tyranny of the Communist conspiracy. It is because of our people's disgust and dread that the Communists must seek their ends by secret subversion, by seducing officials, by discrediting our institutions, sowing distrust among us, aggravating union and racial disputes, entering without conscience into any course that will serve the purpose of Moscow.

Then what is likely to happen to the member of the John Birch Society who abandons all the rules by which he has lived his decent life, and adopts instead the techniques and the rules of conspiracy to fight Communists in Communist fashion?

If the John Birchers follow the program of their leader, they will bring our institutions into question exactly as the Communists try to do. They will sow distrust and aggravate disputes, and they will weaken the

very strong case for conservatism.

What are we to think when our last three Presidents, Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, are accused either of being Communists or Communist dupes?

What are we to think when these charges are leveled against Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, against his brother Allen who heads our vital Central Intelligence Agency, against the Chief Justice of our Supreme Court?

What are we to think when the honor and integrity of the Vice President of the United States, the Republican Party's nominee for President, are questioned?

What are we to think when we are told that our nation's press almost without exception is Communist infiltrated and inspired?

What are we to think when we are told that our churches almost without exception are corroded with active agents of Moscow?

What is happening to us when all loyal Americans are accused of being Communist dupes unless they subscribe to the radical and dictatorial direction of one self-chosen man?

All sincere conservatives must ask themselves these questions. And they must answer them.

The Times believes implicitly in the conservative philosophy. It has challenged all these men and most of these institutions on the soundness of one or more issues. But The Times does not believe that the argument for conservatism can be won—and we do believe it can be won—by smearing as enemies and traitors those with whom we sometimes disagree.

Subversion, whether of the left or the right, is still subversion.

OTIS CHANDLER,
Publisher, The Times.